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SUBJECT: RECENTLY FREED OPPOSITION ACTIVIST BACK IN JAIL

REF: A. 05 MINSK 661, B. MINSK 029

¶1. (U) On April 3, authorities arrested opposition activist Andrey Klimov on criminal charges for allegedly using the mass media to urge citizens to overthrow the constitutional government. If convicted, Klimov could face up to five years in prison. In December 2006, Klimov finished an 18-month restricted freedom (khimya) sentence for his role in organizing the March 25, 2005 demonstration (reftels). In 1998, Klimov -- a once successful businessman and former anti-Lukashenko MP who in 1996 signed a motion to impeach the president -- was sentenced to six years in prison for alleged embezzlement and released in 2002. Both sentences were clearly politically motivated.

¶2. (SBU) In an April 5 phone conversation, Klimov's wife Tatyana Klimova explained to Poloff that the General Prosecutor's Office on April 2 informed Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and the independent internet news source Solidarnast that they opened criminal charges against Klimov and that his "failure" to appear before the prosecutors would pose a "problem" for Klimov. However, according to Klimova, prosecutors did not inform Klimov about the charges. Instead, a friend who heard the broadcast on RFE/RL contacted Klimov, who had just arrived from Moscow (where he now works). On April 3 at 10:00, Klimov went to the General Prosecutor's Office to confirm if the information was true. Head investigator Sergey Ivanov detained the opposition activist on the spot, read him the charges, and immediately sent him to the Volodarskogo pre-detention facility. According to Klimova, her husband managed to phone her during the detainment and said that he was denied a lawyer and being sent to Volodarskogo. The conversation abruptly ended and that was the last time Klimova or anyone else has heard from Klimov. Klimova was allowed only to pass her husband a letter and hygiene products via the Volodarskogo authorities.

¶3. (SBU) In an April 4 interview with the independent online news source BelaPAN, Klimova stressed that authorities were not following proper protocol in arresting her husband. This would explain why Klimov, who usually defends himself in court, demanded a lawyer immediately after being detained. Later that day, Yekaterina Dudko, a state attorney, phoned Klimova claiming she represented Klimov when he was arrested. Dudko later informed RFE/RL that during his arrest, Klimov refused to comment to prosecutors on the charges. Human rights lawyers from the NGO Vyasna contacted Klimova about providing Klimov independent legal counsel. We will continue to report on the status of Klimov's arrest.

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